



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **KEVIN SHELLEY**

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Contact: Caren Daniels-Meade
916-838-6403 (cell)
Carol Dahmen
916-501-1461 (cell)

Secretary of State Kevin Shelley Clarifies Election Observer Rules

Elections are Public, but Access May be Restricted to Allow Officials to do Jobs

SACRAMENTO -- Secretary of State Kevin Shelley today clarified what election observers are allowed to do and urged compliance with the state and county needs as ballots are cast, transported and returned for tallying on election night.

“State law provides that all steps of the election process be open to the public, and we would want it no other way,” Shelley said. “However, there have to be reasonable compromises to allow for physical logistics and to prevent the interruption of the ballot casting or counting processes.”

Observers at polling places during the day are not allowed to film voters coming or leaving the voting site and may not film inside the polling place while the polls are open. There are exceptions, however, allowing for news media crews with consent of the county elections official.

Observers can be inside polling places, however, and may observe the roster of voters, watch the polling place being set up or closed at the end of the day, and they may see voting procedures throughout the day. They may not interfere with the work of the elections staff, nor may they touch any voting materials, station themselves near where voters are casting ballots or depositing their voted ballots, sit at the election board’s table, or intimidate or impede the actions of board members or voters. Electioneering rules apply to them as well.

Operations at the central vote counting centers in the counties are also open to public view under state law. Observers are prohibited from touching any ballot containers and access to the area where computer-processing equipment is operated may be restricted to persons authorized by the elections official. Often, that equipment is in a secured area with windows through which observers may oversee the counting activity. Persons wishing to observe the election operations should check in with the elections official and obtain whatever necessary clearances and badges are issued by the county.